

# THE TEACHING OF CATALAN AROUND THE WORLD



FOLLOWING THE RESTORATION OF CATALAN AUTONOMY AND OF THE GENERALITAT AS THE INSTITUTION OF SELF-GOVERNMENT, STEPS WERE TAKEN TO SHAPE A POLICY OF SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF CATALAN AROUND THE WORLD. SINCE THEN, THE NECESSARY STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO BRING CATALAN LANGUAGE STUDIES ABROAD IN LINE WITH THOSE UNDERTAKEN IN CATALONIA.

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**I**t is now a long time since those first Catalan lessons given by J.M. Batista i Roca at Cambridge University and Joan Coromines at the University of Chicago. That was forty years ago.

Since then, the teaching of Catalan around the world has progressed steadily. Evidence of this are the associations which have been formed in different parts of the world and which bring together students of Catalan language and literature: the Anglo-Catalan Society, founded in 1954; the Associació Internacional de la Llengua i la Literatura Catalanes, founded in 1968; the Associazione Italiana di Studi Catalani; founded in 1977, or the North American Catalan Society, founded in 1978. During the time of the Franco regime, this teaching had to take place without any official support or promotion on the part of the Spanish state. In fact, it would be true to say that it went on in spite of the official Spanish institutions. Following the restoration of Catalan autonomy and of the *Generalitat* as the institution of self-government, steps were taken to shape a policy of support for the teaching of Catalan around the world.

In 1985 the Catalan Parliament urged the government of the *Generalitat* to "initiate the appropriate mechanisms by which to bring the teaching of Catalan abroad into line with teaching in Catalonia".

As a result of this resolution, the President's office and the departments of Education and Culture prepared and carried out a survey directed at universities, associations and other international organizations, so as to carry out

an initial analysis of the situation of Catalan teaching abroad, divided into two main blocks: official courses forming part of a university syllabus, and unofficial courses, not leading to a recognized qualification, and taking place in cultural and civic associations or similar institutions.

The results of that first survey appeared in a report which the *Conseller* for Education, at that time Mr Joan Guitart, presented to the Catalan Parliament in May 1987.

One point of vital importance in drawing up an effective policy of support on the part of the *Generalitat de Catalunya* for the teaching of Catalan abroad was the creation on 20th January 1988 of the Committee for the promotion of the teaching of Catalan in the universities outside the territorial limits of Catalonia.

This committee's work has involved further surveys into the teaching of Catalan abroad (the most recent figures, to be confirmed after the closing date of the latest survey, show that Catalan is taught at sixty universities, twenty-five associations and institutes, seven German popular universities and one official school of languages), the creation of new posts for Catalan lecturers at foreign universities (the closing date for applications for the most recent of these posts was in July of this year, when appointments were offered at universities in Great Britain, France, Poland and the United States), supplies of bibliographic support material for Catalan courses abroad from the Directorate General of Linguistic Policy, the preparation and publication of a *Marc orientatiu per als estudis de català fora del*

*seu domini lingüístic: lectors, casals i institucions* and the organization of successive "Jornades internacionals per a professors de català" (the third edition of which was held this year).

As well as the already mentioned "Jornades internacionals per a professors de català", the Directorate General of Linguistic Policy also intends to offer training programmes for Catalan teachers abroad, incorporating initial training and continued training and including assistance in the form of subventions to foreign organizations for the transfer of specialized teaching staff—as happened recently in Rosario (Argentina), coinciding with the "Primera trobada cultural de casals catalans del con sud d'America"—or in the form of grants for foreign teachers to permit them to attend courses in Catalonia.

Finally, it is important that I should mention the introduction of the International Catalan Certificate by the Directorate General of Linguistic Policy. This certificate has been conceived with the idea of establishing a uniform system by which to assess the knowledge of Catalan acquired by students in different parts of the world. A pilot scheme has already been successfully carried out in various European cities, and it is foreseen that the system will be operative at the end of the 1989-1990 academic year, initially at one level but very soon at two.

It should also be pointed out that contacts have been maintained with a view to integrating the Directorate General of Linguistic Policy's International Catalan Certificate in the International Certificate Conference's range of qualifications.